

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
H-405 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
2269 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert:

We are writing to request your continued support for the U.S. Department of Defense's (DOD) Humanitarian Demining Research and Development (HD R&D) Program, implemented by the U.S. Army. The HD R&D Program specializes in developing and testing innovative technologies to detect and clear landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO), and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These technologies increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and safety of demining operations for military and humanitarian use – saving lives and taxpayer dollars.

The HD R&D team designs technologies to respond to technical challenges in the field, drawing from new commercial technology, equipment currently in use by the DOD, and advanced sensor technology available only through other DOD R&D programs. They then trial prototypes in real field conditions through partnerships with the Department of State's (DOS) humanitarian demining programs. During field evaluations, operators provide feedback on the functionality and effectiveness of the equipment. This allows HD R&D to modify and improve the equipment and increase the U.S. technical capacity to respond to explosive threats.

HD R&D produces three specific outcomes. First, the field evaluation cycle collects enormous amounts of data that helps to improve detection technologies used by our soldiers. Second, successfully trialed equipment is used to train and equip explosive disposal units of allied militaries. By equipping partner militaries to handle their own explosive threats, U.S. soldiers are more likely to remain out of harm's way. Third, HD R&D equipment amplifies taxpayer value for money by increasing the amount of clearance performed on DOS projects without increasing costs.

The HD R&D Program has a track record of success, having performed over 225 operational field evaluations in 42 countries since 1995. The program is responsible for the development of the Handheld Standoff Mine Detection System, which combines metal detection with ground penetrating radar, the rotary mine comb, designed to efficiently excavate low metal content anti-vehicle mines, and TRAXX, specifically built to cut through hard-to-see tripwires and vegetation. Overall, HD R&D equipment has been used to clear more than 65 million square meters of land, and to destroy more than 207,000 mines and UXO.

As you know, HD R&D receives funding from **Appropriation 0400: Research, Development, Test & Evaluation, Defense-Wide / Budget Activity 4: Advanced Component Development & Prototypes / Program Element 0603920D8Z**. The program budget has seen several years of underfunding, and in FY21, the President's budget proposes a 42% funding decrease from the FY20 appropriation. From FY10 to FY12, the program received between \$14.7 million and nearly \$15 million, with an FY12 high of \$14.9 million. After falling to a low of \$10 million in FY17, the budget slowly climbed to \$11.3 million in FY19.

Due to strong Congressional advocacy, the program received \$14.7 million in FY20. However, the 22 percent decrease in funding between FY10 and FY19 resulted in fewer trials and less equipment development, creating a need to further increase funding in FY21. Further, a 42% funding decrease from FY20 FY21 would drastically curtail the ability of the HD R&D program to develop necessary demining equipment that would otherwise create cost savings on State Department demining contracts.

We urge the committee to support funding at a level of \$17 million in FY2021 for HD R&D. This additional funding will improve the ability of U.S. soldiers and our allies' ability to safely detect and clear landmines, UXO, and IEDs. This funding is especially important as new conflicts uncover new threats in areas like the Middle East, Libya, and Ukraine.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you throughout the appropriations process to save many military and civilian lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress

**Funding for Department of Defense's (DOD)
Humanitarian Demining Research and Development (HD R&D) Program**
List of Signatories

Cindy Axne
Karen Bass
Congressman Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Rob Bishop
Rick Crawford
Susan A. Davis
Madeleine Dean
Debbie Dingell
Brian Fitzpatrick
Ruben Gallego
John Garamendi
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Jim Himes
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Sheila Jackson Lee
John Katko
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Susie Lee
Daniel W. Lipinski
Alan Lowenthal
James P. McGovern
Ilhan Omar
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